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SUBJECT: PARWAN PROVINCE: GOVERNANCE, ELECTIONS, SECURITY,
AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Classified By: By PRT Director Valerie Fowler for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Parwan, one of two provinces that form the northern gateway to Kabul, is relatively free of violence and poppy but remains woefully lacking in development and economic growth due to a lack of human capacity. Governor Taqwa prioritizes development efforts in Charikar, the provincial seat; as a result, problems and challenges in the rest of the province receive less consideration. The Provincial Council, Provincial Development Council, ministry line directors, and other government officials have been wary of engaging with Americans, though recent efforts by the PRT to engage with members of these groups have met with a tentative, but positive, reception. With the recent loss of the ANAP and a small ANP presence in Kohe Safi District, the area risks becoming a safe-haven for Taliban and other anti-coalition forces activity, unless additional ANSF forces are committed to the area. End summary.

GOVERNANCE

¶2. (SBU) The Governor, Abdul Jabar Taqwa, has served for more than three years as governor of Parwan province and is looking to transfer to another province. He is convinced everything is going well in Parwan; for him, success in Charikar equals success in the rest of the province. He asserts that no political schisms, governance or economic difficulties exist in the province, except in Charikar; this directly contradicts what the PRT has heard and observed.

The governor is cooperating more with the PRT than in the past (e.g., allowing his line directors to work with the PRT), but he retains a tight grip on power in the province.

¶3. (C) The Provincial Council (PC) poses challenges for the PRT. The PC is led by Farid Ahmad Shafaq, who has been connected to the HIG, to criminal elements in Parwan, and to Parwan Wolesi Jirga MP Haji Almas. (Note: Haji Almas has been directly linked to both Iranian and Russian Intelligence Agencies.) Additionally, unlike in neighboring Kapisa where male members of the PC work well with female colleagues, women in Parwan have been

sidelined. Female PC members rarely travel to nearby Bagram; even if their male relatives allow them to travel, doing so carries a social stigma few are willing to bear. Few female leaders in Parwan will meet or work with the PRT: two exceptions are PC member Rayesa Saber and Wolessi Jirga member Shafiqa Noori.

SECURITY

¶4. (C) Parwan is mostly secure, particularly in the central and western regions. The southeastern leg, Kohe Safi, is somewhat isolated from the rest of the Province, both geographically and tribally (mostly Pashtun in a Tajik-dominated province). Reports of the Taliban transiting the area are common. The PRT has planned two road projects to increase the ability of security forces to travel in the area, and provide economic opportunities to the local population. The first project will connect Tagab to Kohe Safi. The second project is a horseshoe-shaped road that will connect Camp Blackhorse (near Pol-E-Charki) to the southern tip of Kohe-Safi in Jowzack. The Jowzack area has historically been inaccessible, providing a staging area for insurgents to target Kabul. In recent weeks, there have been increased reports of increased Taliban presence -- indicated by rocket fire and night letters in north-central Kohe Safi, particularly around Shinwari and Sia Gird. The PRT assesses this as an effort by the enemy to build a support base for next year's fight, rather than an immediate threat.

ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT

¶5. (SBU) With large and bustling markets, Charikar is one of the area's main economic centers. It is also home to the only women's market in all of Kapisa and Parwan, opened this summer under USAID aegis. Similarly, Jablusrj to the north could become a major industrial center thanks to its proximity to natural resources of power (if a dam is built), marble and rocks for a new cement plant. Outside of these city centers, the economy is agricultural-based. Much of the farming is subsistence, with some indicators of greater farming capacity. In southern Surkh Parsa, some farmers rotate crops of alfalfa, tobacco and wheat. They sell their tobacco throughout Afghanistan, and claim it is some of the finest in country. The biggest "point of failure" in the economic system is finance, business, and marketing capacity. There is a significant need for human capacity training in these areas. The PRT is working with women, farmers, cooperatives, and the government to address some of these needs. Further focus on technical training to match the current gaps would be particularly useful in building a potential economic engine in Parwan

WOOD